(ix) Facilities by way of eco-testing laboratories have been created to epable exporters to get the garments/textiles pre-tested for conforming to the requirements of importing countries.

Priority to handloom weaving industry

915. SHRIMATI AMBIKA SONY:
DR. T. SUBBARAMI REDDY:

Will the Minister of TEXTILES be pleased to state:

(a) whether handicrafts and handloom weaving industry occupied a central place in national development policy about 20 years ago;

(b) whether recently economic reforms have made this sector weak and it has been totally ignored;

(c) whether only 7000 crores had been advanced to this industry in last five years as against the target of Rs. 25,000 crores; and

(d) whether Government propose to give preference to this sector?

THE MINISTER OF TEXTILES (SHRI SHANKERSINH VAGHELA): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) No, Sir.

(c) The budgetary provision in the handicrafts and handloom sector has increased from the level of Rs. 315.00 crores and 452.50 crores respectively during the 9th Plan to Rs. 425.00 crores and 625.00 crores respectively during 10th Plan.

(d) Yes Sir. Under the National Common Minimum Programme handicrafts and handloom sectors have been iaentified as one of the important sectors for increasing employment opportunities.

Export of handicrafts

†916. PROF. R.B.S. VARMA: Will the Minister of TEXTILES be pleased to state:

(a) the status of export of handicrafts during the last three years;

(b) whether it is a fact that export of handicrafts has increased during the current year; and

†Original notice of the Question was received in Hindi.

(c) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF TEXTILES (SHRI SHANKERSINH VAGHELA): (a) The export of handicrafts including hand-knotted carpets during the last three years is as under:—

Sl. No.	Year	Exports (Rs. In crores)
1.	2001-02	9205.63
2.	2002-03	10933.67
3.	2003-04	12765.18

(b) and (c) Yes, Sir. the export of handicrafts including hand-knotted carpets during the current financial year *i.e.* 2004-05 (upto Jan., 2005) is to the tune of Rs. 12123.44 crores compared to Rs. 9847.95 crores during the corresponding period of 2003-04, thus showing an increase of 23.11%.

Closure of textiles mills

917. SHRI JAYANTILAL BAROT: Will the Minister of TEXTILES be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Board of Industrial and Financial Reconstruction (BIFR) Govemment of India have sanctioned the closure of 66 textile mills so far;

(b) if so, what steps Government have taken for welfare of workers of those 66 textile mills;

(c) the reasons for approving the closure of those textile mills; and

(d) the reasons for closure of another 65 textile mills?

THE MINISTER OF TEXTILES (SHRI SHANKERSINH VAGHELA): (a) to.(d) BIFR/Government sanctioned rehabilitation schemes for the sick subsidiaries of NTC, which includes closure of 66 chronic loss-making mills and revival of 53 revivable mills, as per Techno-Economic Viability Studies conducted by Textile Research Associations. So far 65 out of these 66 unviable mills have been closed and VRS given to 44,159 employees at a cost of Rs. 1,531.94 crores. Interests of workers have been protected by giving a liberal VRS, which provides for enhanced ex-*gratia* if there is no wage revision since 1987/1992.